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CONCLUSION

The Mudugas are a small little known scheduled tribal group inhabiting the Attappady area of Palakkad district in north Kerala. They are distributed in about 21 hamlets called *Oorw*. The basic unit of Muduga social organization is the patrilineal clan known as *koottam*

The Muduga residential settlement called a hamlet or the *oorw* is associated with a particular clan or *koottam* whose ancestors were believed to be the original inhabitants of the land Although, a hamlet is considered as the traditional land of a particular patrilineal clan, a hamlet is not always composed of a particular descent group alone Though the notion of agnation through birth forms the basis of descent membership, local groups or hamlets are not restricted to agnatic descendants only A ffines and non-agnates from other clan become established co-residents, build huts, clear land, cultivate and participate in the life of the agnates of the hamlet

In common day to day context, reference to clan or descent group is rarely made The people tend not to concern much with the nature and role of their descent groups in their daily affairs Most of the young generation art not awarc of their descent group and cannot state specifically the descent group of their affines, nor are they concerned to do so Among the Mudugas, marriages are often devoid of elaborate ceremon es, and bride-prnce need not be strictly paid at the initial stage itself, but are free to pay at a Later stage Moreover, with regard to marital union, kinship terminology and system of kin categorization play the crucial role rather than descent group

These factors give the impression that Mudugas seem to be different from a strong patnhneal $> stem of the ideal type But the deeply rooted patrilineal ideology subtle in the system, forms the fundamental basis of the Muduga social organisation The rules or ideology will not be always congruent with practice and cannot *be* observed in all cases

Though affines are recruited as co-residents, even after generatioes the ties of co-residence will not be converted into ties of descent, tibtst treating identity through locality and identity through descent as independent of each other Thus affines remain affine

and will never be assimilated or incorporated into the agnatic fold during their life time. This fundamental opposition between agnates and affines forms a basic principle of Muduga kinship.

E\ en if agnates are distributed in other hamlets, they are never lost permanently for the clan. They are brought back to the natal land in course of time at different stages :

a. A man, after a period of 3 –5 years of bride-service in his affines hamlet will return to his natal land with his wife and children to live along with his agnates.
b. Or else in his old age returns to bis natal land so as to die and get buried in his natal land.
c. Or after death, the body *is* brought back to the natal land and buried.
d Or finally, during dry-funeral (*bara-savu*) the bones of their agnates who got buried in other hamlets will be collected and taken to the natal hamlet for the second burial along with the bones of other agnates.

All these factors clearly show how the agnates even though dispersed in other clan lands are abstracted out and finally incorporated into the 'world' of ancestors which depict* their deep rooted descent ideology.

After the patrilineal *koottam*, it is the family that constitute the most discrete social grouping among the Mudugas. It is the family which always takes the form of a household functioning as the domestic unit The day to day activities of the Mudugas operate at the level of the family or household Nuclear family household is the prominent type among Mudugas However, members other than the nuclear family also form pan of a household giving rise to different types of family household. Various demographic, social, economic and ecological factors have an impact oa the composition of household.

The basic requirement of * Muduga household is the co-operation and sharing in domestic activities by a man and a woman. However children also assist their parents in various activities giving rise to a sex-wise and age-wise division of labour fcd it is not only the members of a household that co-operate and share labour and food. Households of primary kin enter in a regular storing of food. These food sharing households arc called *beethekarar*. They are usually the households of primary relatives of either the husband or the wife. It is the households of this *tenkH&rar* unit which always co-operate and interact

together and share labour and food. Depending on the extent of kin relation, there exist different spheres of co-operation and sharing ranging from the *basic* unit-household, to the wider unit-hamlet.

The two-section framework of Muduga kinship terminology divides the entire relatives into two, the agnates (parallel relatives) referred as *anna-thampi* and the affines (cross-relatives) referred as *macha-maman*. The fundamental opposition of sharing and exchange-sharing among the agnates and exchange between affines, form a major aspect of Muduga Social structure. Thus between affines there is exchange of women, bride-price, goods and service The agnates share among themselves food, land, labour and above all the sharing of agnatic substance. The perpetual flow of women across clan is reciprocated by the flow of goods, service and bride price in the opposite direction and this process is diachronic in nature. Thus the opposition between sharing and exchange represents the dual dimension of social reproduction internally through the perpetuation of a shared identity and externally through the exchange of reproductive assets

The kin terminological system and the cross-cousin marriage rule embedded in it itself regulate marital union and other associated behaviour pattern. The terminological system would also be perfectly permissible from the view point of descent exogamy though the knowledge of descent groups are often secondary with regard to mamage union. That is, they give preference to category rather than group The Mudugas have bilateral cross-cousin marriage rule A man is prescribed to marry a woman of the category *atttai* and a woman to marry a man of the category *machan*, the category that includes bilateral cross-cousins (FZD/FZS and MBD/MBS) Within this categor> of cross-cousins, no preference is expressed to either paternal or maternal side

The sharing of food and labour and co-operation in domestic affairs between a male and a female is the basic feature of a Muduga mimed life According to tradition, there are no ceremonial events which bridges pre-and post-marriage status among the Mudugas. Rather, marriage crystallize as time passes, children and other indices accumulate, bride price is paid and the community recognizes the marriage and the couple so presents themselves to the society

The exchange of bride-price initiates a series of prestations to be exchanged between the two groups united by affinal links. The establishment and consecration of

affinal ties between descent groups are more significant and conspicuous and are governed by a set of well defined obligations, roles and prestations between the affines and consanguines on various occasions. The most outstanding and significant of these relationships are seen between the mother's brother and sister's children and also between cross-cousins binding the affinal families and their respective group in an alliance tie. The importance of mother's brother can be seen during all life cycle rituals of his sister's children where he is given utmost importance.

From the ethnographic description it is evident that the actual practices of Mudugas appear to deviate from an ideal patrilineal type exhibiting bilateral tendencies which are not charactenstic of a strong patrilineal society. The alignment between mother's brother and sister's children are very strong and they *do* engage in wide-ranging rou!ti*pwpose exchange with maternal kin and affines reducing the prevalence of corporate groups based strictly on patrilineal kin. Rather than completely ignoring the filial relation between mother and children, they consider the matrilineal link as complementary to the patrilineal link and the 'agnatic substance[1] transferred from father to son. Moreover, in regulating marital union, kin terminological categories play major and important role than the notion of lineal exogamy. Among Mudugas, the women retain relationship with their natal group, and arc not cut off ev en after marriage They are incorporated into their husband's descent group only after their death.

Among Mudugas, often noted is the practice of a delayed bride-price payment Bndc-pnce. which initiates a series of exchange between two official groups, need not be strictly paid at the time of marriage They are free to pay it in a later stage However it cannot be concluded that among Mudugas there is no strict and firm rule regarding bode price payment The strong under lying rule of reciprocal exchange functions in such a way that no marital union can escape the transaction of bride-price Though not at the time of marriage, but later at the death of either of the spouses or even at a later stage during dry funeral, the bndc-pnce had to be paid b> the agnates, failing which the fc«<Ky*^ group is denied right in the wife's bone and will not be assimilated into his group.

Payment of bride-price ensures the transfer of right in the woman's labour right to her sexual services, right in her body and boot after death, and above all bride-price payment transfer the right in the children to her husband t group. Thus it is not only the

wife's kin who are particular with the bride-price. But the husband's kin group are also more particular in paying this debt and taking the right of the children.

Marriages cannot always occur between cross-cousins (real or classificatory) only However, the newly formed affines through relatives related by non-kin marriages are assimilated into the correct terminological frame work as if the union bad occurred between cross-cousins. The relationship they create supersede those existing before hand and they manage to address one another using kin terms which are applied logically and consistently Hence, union can be treated as "wrong" only in the behavioural level or in practice, but not in the prescriptive sense.

The basic confusion with regard to cross-cousin marriage forms is that which tends to mix up two entirely different phenomena. That is, a preference for mamage with an actual first cousin as against other cross-cousins, and • prescriptive rule which requires that only women of one particular category of relative may be considered legitimate spouse Among the Mudugas, a male may legitimately marry any female of the category *'amai'* It has been a 'regrettable convention', as Leach (1962) says, to translate classificatory kinship categories by the closest genealogical denotata. The main error lies in the attempt to explain the rules by assuming that prescription is in fact concerned with mamage with real cross-cousins In a bilateral cross-cousin form, a clear distinction between mother's side and father's side cannot be reached since person related through father occupies the same kin type position through mother, as a bilateral relative though the genealogical nearness vanes Thus when a person marries his *mama* 's* (MB) daughter, real or classificatory, in the prescriptive level he is also marrying his *mami'$* (FZ) daughter

If the principle of descent provides the diachrotue anchor to the relationship within the descent group, it is the rule of bilateral cross-cousin marriage and the concomitant kin terminological frame work that provides the diachronic scope for the affinal relationship to be continued between the descent groups from generation to generation. Though this is true at the ideological level, the transmission of affinal alliance does not operate in the same perspective fashion as it is seen tn the case of descent and the relationship within the descent group at the empirical level.

It is observed that the affinal relation and the associated interpersonal obligations and prestations operates at the level *of* affinally related families. The circle of affinal

relations changes with change in the line of alliance and this affinity is hardly more than marriage and have a synchronic nature. Nevertheless, the terminological structure would be perfectly congruent with repeated bilateral cross-cousin marriages depicting affinity as being transmitted continuously from generation to generation between two groups giving a diachronic nature.

The fundamental opposition of sharing and exchange sharing among the agnates and exchange between affines, forms the basis of Muduga kinship organization. One is the lineal mode of exchange depicted through the propitiation of ancestors and the rights and obligations among agnates. The Agnate share among themselves food, land, labour and above all the sharing of agnatic substance.

The second one is the lateral exchange through alliance and associated obligations and payments The exchange of women across clan is reciprocated by the flow of goods, service, and bride-price in the opposite direction which takes a diachronic nature. Thos the opposition between sharing and exchange represents the dual dimension of social reproduction internally through the perpetuation of a shared identity and externally through the exchange of reproductive assets.

There exist a certain degree of inconsistency between the actual practice and the rule in every aspects of Muduga social system These elements of inconsistency do not lead to the disintegration of system but arc actual elements of Muduga kinship which are inevitable in practice Thus rules do not correspond exactly to behaviour but exist in order to regulate it, to set limits upon it The patrilineal ideology functions as an underlying implicit frame work which holds back and legitimise the elements of disorganization and encompass the range of practices within the fold of the system maintaining a structural continuity This nature of the Muduga society can be well understood only by a meaningful linking of the ideal and the actual through the interrelationship between structural premises and the ground reality